

12.135 RESPONDING TO ALARMS AND REPORTING FALSE ALARMS

References:

Chapter 807, Alarm Businesses and Alarm Systems
 City of Cincinnati Ordinance 108-5
 City of Cincinnati Ordinance 448-1986
 City of Cincinnati Ordinance 0147-2003
 City of Cincinnati Ordinance 0256-2003

Definitions:

Multi-Agency Radio Communications System (MARCS) – radios that allow direct communication with local Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). These alarms will only be activated by a Cincinnati Public School (CPS) employee when it is not feasible or possible to make phone contact through 9-1-1.

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) – Mutual Aid Police Dispatch Centers for the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, and City of Norwood.

Purpose:

Establish Form 315, Alarm Response Report, as the uniform method for documenting a false holdup, burglar, audible, or panic alarm.

Improve the effectiveness of alarm systems and reduce the number of false alarms.

Document false alarms resulting from defective alarm equipment or subscriber negligence and provide information for determining fees.

Expedite the response and arrival of law enforcement personnel to emergency incidents occurring on school property.

Policy:

Department personnel will respond to and investigate all audible, burglar, holdup, panic and MARCS alarms. Officers will exercise due caution when investigating these alarms and shall continue to do so until the alarm is proven to be false or, prior to an officer's arrival, the alarm is cancelled by the alarm company through the Emergency Communications Center (ECC).

After careful consideration of the circumstances, field supervisors may cancel response to a burglar, holdup, or panic alarm drop when operational needs dictate. Examples of this are: inclement weather / high winds, meter reader activity, electrical outages, etc. Supervisors should give special consideration when these situations involve panic alarms or any suspicious circumstances. Supervisors may not cancel response to MARCS alarms.

The Department may impose fees for multiple false alarms from the same user pursuant to Cincinnati Municipal Code, Section 807.

Information:

Alarm companies are now required to make a second attempt to reach the complainant at an alternate number if there is no answer on their first attempt to contact a complainant. If they are unable to reach the complainant on the second attempt, the alarm company will then contact ECC to request police response.

The activation of a MARCS alarm by a school employee could mean an active shooter incident is in progress. Officers responding to these alarms should keep in mind that active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. In situations where it is confirmed a MARCS alarm has been activated due to an active shooter incident, officers will follow the active shooter response plan outlined in the Department's Tactical Patrol Guide.

Procedure:**A. Form 315, Alarm Response Report:**

1. A Form 315 will be completed for the following false alarms:
 - a. Signal 6: holdup alarm
 - b. Signal 66: direct line holdup alarm
 - c. Signal 7: burglar alarm
 - d. Signal 77: recorded burglar alarm
 - e. Robbery Apprehension Program (RAP) alarm
 - 1) In addition to completing a Form 315, the investigating officer will immediately contact the Criminal Investigation Section (CIS) desk with the false RAP alarm information.
 - f. Audible alarm on structures
 - g. Panic alarm
 - h. Panic alarm from vehicles
 - 1) These include audible or silent duress alarms activated by a vehicle occupant and transmitted to an alarm company. They do not include audible alarms indicating vehicle tampering or break-in.
2. Do not complete Form 315 for:
 - a. Offenses that will be documented on a Cincinnati Police Department Incident Report.
 - b. An alarm activated by an officer during the investigation of a Place Found Open (PFO) (see Section B.).
 - c. A false fire box alarm.

- d. An audible tampering alarm from a vehicle.
 - e. False alarms cancelled by the alarm company through ECC, prior to police arrival.
 - f. MARCS alarms.
3. Preparing a Form 315:
- a. The following information is mandated by the City's alarm ordinance. PRINT all information neatly and accurately. Form 315 is reference material for alarm appeal hearings and municipal court.
 - 1) DATE - Date of dispatch.
 - 2) TIME - Time of dispatch.
 - 3) DISTRICT/BEAT - Location where the alarm occurred.
 - 4) NAME - Record the full name of the business or resident subscriber.
 - 5) REGISTRATION NUMBER - Is provided by the alarm company of the registered alarm user, in the text of the radio run. If no registration number is provided, enter "NONE" in the box.
 - 6) ADDRESS - Be specific. Include the zip code to allow for proper billing of the subscriber.
 - 7) APARTMENT, BUILDING, ETC. - In addition to the street address, include the apartment number, building number, etc.
 - 8) ALARM LOCATION - Record, if known, the exact location of the alarm (i.e. front door, 1st floor rear window, etc.).
 - 9) SIGNAL - Record the proper signal for the type of alarm. (Refer to Section A.1.a through g.)
 - 10) RESIDENTIAL, BUSINESS, OTHER - Check the appropriate box for the type of premise.
 - 11) ALARM COMPANY - Record only if known (e.g., information from ECC, owner or company representative).
 - 12) ALARM COMPANY RESPONDED - Check the appropriate block.
 - a) If an alarm company representative responds while the police are at the scene, record the name of the individual.
 - 13) OWNER/REPRESENTATIVE NOTIFIED - On alarms where an owner/representative is notified while the police are present, record the individual's name and obtain their signature. The False Alarm Reduction Unit (FARU) will mail the yellow copy of the Form 315 to the registered alarm user along with a letter of notification.

- a) If unable to obtain a signature from the owner or representative, process the Form 315 as described in A.4.a. No further attempt to obtain a signature is required.
- 14) OFFICER NAME, BADGE NUMBER - Enter the notifying officer's name and badge number. (PRINT)
- 15) ABLE TO SEARCH PREMISES - Check the appropriate block describing the extent of the search.
- 16) K-9 - Note the involvement of a canine team, if applicable.
- 17) CAUSE - This is the reporting officer's judgment, based upon known facts and observations while at the scene. Use additional comments if needed.
- 18) WEATHER - Check the appropriate block based upon the officer's observations at the time of dispatch and arrival.
- 19) OTHER COMMENTS - This space is available for any relevant information. For example, the reporting officer may note an area-wide power outage at the time of the alarm. Report any information which will help the subscriber improve the alarm system. Use the back of the form if necessary.
- 20) REPORTING OFFICER - Provide the name, rank, and badge number of the reporting officer. This officer need not be the officer dispatched or first at the scene. However, the reporting officer must have been on the scene during the alarm investigation.
- 21) SUPERVISOR - The reviewing supervisor will check the form for completeness and accuracy, then sign his name, rank, and badge number.

NOTE: Under Cincinnati Municipal Code, Section 807-11, alarm users are responsible for multiple false alarms sent by alarm systems on premises under their control.

If alarm users have problems with their alarm system, they should contact their alarm company representative immediately. Failure to correct the problem can lead to the assessment of administrative fees. The paragraphs above are printed on back of Form 315 and should be noted to alarm users.

4. Routing Form 315:

- a. Using interdepartmental mail, the District Quality Assurance (DQA) will forward the white and yellow copies of the completed Form 315 to the FARU.
- b. The FARU will:

- 1) Review each Form 315 for completeness and accuracy.
- 2) Compare the report with the ECC computerized summary of alarms.
 - a) If a Form 315 is not received, notify the affected unit commander.
 - 1] The unit commander will take the necessary action to ensure the FARU receives the required Form 315.
- 3) Correct the Form 315 as necessary.
- 4) Enter the Form 315 into the computerized file.
- 5) Charge alarm users for false alarms as authorized in City Ordinance 448-1986. The yellow copy of the Form 315 will be mailed with the invoice.

B. Burglar Alarms Activated by Officers Checking a Place Found Open:

1. Do not complete Form 315.
2. Complete a Form 317, General Conditions Report, for a PFO.
 - a. In the section titled "Action Taken," state the investigating officer activated the alarm while searching the premises.
3. Submit the completed Form 317 for supervisory approval.
4. Supervisor will route the completed Form 317 to the DQA for submission to Police Records Section.
5. This alarm activation will not be counted against the alarm user.